TIPS FOR FIRST TIME LSTA SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT WRITERS

All Special Needs LSTA projects must begin by identifying a population that has special needs. A partnering agency(ies) is required. Sometimes someone in the community brings the needs of a population group to the attention of the library. Sometimes the staff evaluates their services in various areas of special needs and identifies weaknesses. Sometimes an individual patron's request may raise awareness about a need in the community. Often the question librarians ask is "What groups in the community are not using the library, and why?" The focus of all special needs project should be on meeting the needs of a targeted group, rather than focusing on a need the library has and then trying to build a project around that need.

The next step for any special needs project is to contact the partnering agency and/or members of the targeted population to find out from them what they feel the targeted population most needs. The project development should come from that discussion. The partnering agency should then be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project.

For tips about various aspects of writing a Special Needs LSTA grant click on any of the following topics.

1. Core Documents Needed to Write an LSTA Application

2. Tips on Using the *LSTA Guidelines* Book and Highlights
    - LSTA Purposes
    - Schedule
    - Grant Category Information
    - Grant Process and Procedure
    - FAQ on LSTA Grants
    - Application Form

3. Basic Requirements of all Special Needs Projects
    - General Requirements
        - Start Up Funding
        - Staff Costs
        - Collection Development Category
        - Special Restrictions

4. Tips for Writing a JOBS Application
    - Research
    - Planning
    - Staff Training Component
    - Time Line
    - Evaluation
    - Budget

1. Core Documents Needed to Write an LSTA Application

- The current year's *Wisconsin LSTA Guidelines*
- The current year's application form
- Other documents that may be helpful:
  - Go to www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/lsta.html and look at abstracts of projects written in recent years that may be similar or related to what you want to do.
  - If a project looks interesting, contact Terrie Howe or Barb Huntington to request a copy of the complete application.

2. Tips on Using the *LSTA Guidelines* Book and Highlights

There is a great deal of information in the *Guidelines* that writers need to know. Start by reading the entire publication. Failure to include required elements or writing a project that does not fit a category can result in a project not being funded. There is information in the text of the Guidelines that is not included on the application, due to lack of space. Applicants are expected to understand the information in all sections of the *Guidelines*.

LSTA Purposes—every project must meet one or more of the LSTA statutory purposes. The purposes are included in the beginning of the Guidelines and there is a place on the application to select the appropriate purpose(s).

Schedule—the deadlines for all LSTA projects are firm. Be sure to check the schedule in the front part of the Guidelines so that you are aware of all important filing dates.

Grant Category Information— Required elements for projects are indicated in this section. Failure to address required elements can result in the grant application being designated as not permissible or in loss of points when reviewers score the applications.

The information for each category explains who is eligible to apply and the purpose of that category. There are general requirements for the category and specific examples given for what is allowed and some indications of things that would not be acceptable. Inclusion of non-acceptable elements can result in designation of the project not being acceptable or loss of points by reviewers.

If applicants have questions about the category they should contact Barb Huntington or Terrie Howe at DLTC for clarification.

Grant Process and Procedure—This section includes information on the procedures used for the LSTA projects, the review process, the awarding of funding for projects, the appeal process, and the responsibilities of agencies receiving funding.

FAQ on LSTA Grants—The federal LSTA administrative agency (IMLS) has made recent changes in how the LSTA program is administered. Some allowable expenses and procedures used in the past are no longer acceptable. This section clarifies some of the issues. Among the significant changes relate to marketing, refreshments, incentives, and entertainment. Reading this section can help grant writers avoid numerous mistakes that may result in a loss of points for various sections or in overall merit points.

Marketing, Refreshments, Incentives (items to be given away), and Entertainment (performers, parties, field trips) are generally not allowable expenses. Contact Barb Huntington for assistance before submitting the application if you intend to include something in one of these areas.

Application Form—The final section of the *Guidelines* is a copy of the draft application form . There is information on the form that is not included in the previous sections of the Guidelines, so reading the instructions on each section of the application and following them is extremely important. If grant writers have questions about the application form they should call Terrie Howe or Barb Huntington.

3. Basic Requirements of all Special Needs Projects

All special needs projects begin with a population that has a special need. Each category explains the specific targeted populations but in general , the criteria is a group of people who have problems using the library because of their educational, cultural, or socioeconomic situation or because of a disability. All special needs projects must be done in collaboration with a partnering agency (ies). Failure to identify the partnering agency will disqualify a project from funding.

General Requirements of all Special Needs Projects

Start Up Funding—In general, LSTA funding for special needs projects is considered to be "start-up" funding, rather than on-going funding. To address this issue, the application asks applicants to identify other recent projects the applicant has received related to the general topic. If the applicant fails to indentify recent projects, DLTCL will provide the information and the failure may result in a loss of points for the project during the review process. Applicants have a chance to justify continuation of a specific project if it is building on what was done recently. Applicants are also expected to have a solid continuation plan for the project that is not dependent on further LSTA funding. Points are awarded by the reviewers for how strong the continuation plan is for the project.

Staff Costs—Funding to pay for staff is allowed , but LSTA funding can't supplant local funding. Applicants need a good justification for the need to cover staff costs. When most of the project funding is used to pay staff, the question reviewers may ask is, "How will the library or system continue the project or pay for the staff when the project ends, if they need staff funding this year?" It is helpful to identify who is being paid. If it is a part-time employee who will increase their hours , explain their current position, rate of pay, and anticipate number of added hours. If a new person will be hired explain the qualifications, what the duties will be, anticipated rate of pay, and number of hours. Reviewers are likely to deduct points if it appears that local staff funding is being supplanted.

There is No General Collection Development Category—Most libraries could use more money to buy more materials. That need alone does not justify LSTA funding. If funding is used primarily for materials there should be a clear indication for the need, and an explanation of how the targeted population will know about the new materials. The outcome of the project should indicate the impact and likely change the new materials are to have on the targeted population.

JOBS Projects Have Special Restrictions
Projects in the JOBS category are limited to a maximum of $20,000 and preference will be given to applications that serve areas with higher than average unemployment rates. The reviewers will be instructed to award additional points in the Needs Assessment section for projects serving populations with above average unemployment rates.

4. Tips for Writing a JOBS Application

A. Research

Articulate what made you think there was a need for a JOBS project for your community or system?

Find out as much as you can before you start about the people in your service area who need employment help. Good starting places are the county job service, technical colleges, Division for Vocational Rehabilitation offices, county or community social service agencies, homeless services coordinators for the local school district(s), and faith based organization s that provide employment services.

Ask the agencies you contact to give you an overview of the needs in your area. Ask what services they provide. Collect any data they might be able to share. Ask what needs are not being met. Discuss what role the public library might in addressing unmet needs.

B. Planning

After meeting with the agencies providing direct services to people seeking employment help, think through what the library might be able to offer that would compliment what is already being done. A list of possibilities is included in the category description in the *Guidelines*. Abstracts of current JOBS projects may offer additional ideas. The Abstracts are on the DLTCL LSTA web page at www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/lsta.html. When you have some ideas, contact your partnering agency(ies) again to get their input and suggestions. Discuss ways the library can collaborate with the agency(ies). Explore an official collaboration arrangement with interested agencies.

C. Staff Training Component

If no one on staff has a good deal of experience in meeting the specific needs of job seekers or people who want to improve their job skills, decide how the library will provide training for staff. Often the partnering agency(ies) will provide training for the library.

D. Time Line

Make a list of all the activities related to the project, and the items that would be needed to complete the project. As you work along, arrange the list into specific tasks and begin to put them in steps as to the order in which the tasks would need to be done. As the project takes shape indicate the specific person who will do the task. With the help of your partnering agency(ies) arrange the tasks into a monthly breakdown of when they will be done and who will do what. This time line will eventually become part of the application.

E. Evaluation

Once you have an idea of what you want to do, decide how you would measure the effectiveness of your efforts. You will be measuring more than just a list of activities that get done. Try to think in terms of the over-all impact, the effect what you are doing will have on the community. These will be your outcomes.

F. Budget

Investigate the costs of the materials, subscription, or equipment that may be needed for the project and get estimates.

5. Tips for Writing a Literacy Application
What Type of Literacy Project is Needed?

Articulate what made you think there was a need for a literacy project for your community or system? There are several major types of literacy. Which best describes the people in your community who have literacy needs?

a) English Language Learners (or English as a Second Language)
b) Adult basic education (People who never completed high school or who need a GED)
c) People with learning disabilities (often students identified by local schools)
d) Prison and Institutional Literacy (this includes county jails, state or federal prisons, state, county, or municipal detention facilities for juveniles, agencies housing juvenile offenders)
e) Adolescents at Risk of Illiteracy See the Adolescent Literacy web page at www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/adolit.html for information on teens who are considered to be at high risk of illiteracy. These groups include teens in middle school or high school who are:
    1) In special education classes
    2) Enrolled in alternative high school programs
    3) Members of an ethnic minority group
    4) Have disabilities
    5) Live in poverty
    6) Use a language other than English in the home
    7) Teen parents
    8) Involved with the juvenile justice system and may have court ordered placements in group homes, state detention facilities, county or local jails,
    9) In the foster care system
    10) Homeless—runaways and “throw away” kids
    11) Currently expelled from their school
f) Early or Emergent Literacy
   See the Early Learning Initiative at www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/earlylearning.html for information about young children most at risk of repeating the cycle of illiteracy. Young children most at risk include preschool and kindergarten aged children who:
    1) Live in poverty
    2) Have parents who speak a language other than English
    3) Have teen parents
    4) Have parents who are in jail or prison

A. Research

Find out as much as you can before you start about the people in your service area who have literacy needs. Possible Agency Contacts Include:

a)	ELL or ESL	Local literacy providers, technical colleges, social service agencies and faith based organizations that serve ELL populations. ELL teachers in school districts for juveniles
b)	Adult basic education	Local literacy providers, technical colleges, high schools
c)	People with disabilities, especially learning disabilities	Social service agencies providing services to people with special education teachers in local school districts, programs providing services for people with learning disabilities
d)	Prison and Institutional Literacy	Prison and jail administrators, social workers, and educators, literacy providers, parole officials
e)	Adolescents	Special education teachers, alternative high school staff, juvenile justice system staff, school social workers and guidance counselors district homeless coordinators; ESL teachers, social service agencies and faith based organizations that provide services to specific ethnic minority groups and teens in foster care, agencies providing services to teen parents, teen shelters and free clinics, mental health facilities serving teens
f)	Early and Emergent Literacy	Head Start, Even Start, school districts, WIC, social service agencies, day care providers who serve young children who are at high risk of illiteracy, agencies providing services to teen parents, social service agencies and faith based organizations that provide services to specific ethnic minority groups, free clinics; social service agencies that provide services to families of inmates

Ask the agencies you contact to give you an overview of the needs of the particular targeted group for whom you want to provide services. Ask what services they provide. Collect any data they might be able to share. Ask what needs are not being met. Discuss what role the public library might in addressing unmet needs.

B. Planning

After meeting with the agencies providing direct services to the targeted group that has literacy needs, think through what the library might be able to offer that would compliment what is already being done. When you have some ideas, contact your partnering agency(ies) again to get their input and suggestions. Discuss ways the library can collaborate with the agency(ies). Explore an official collaboration arrangement with interested agencies. It is highly unusual for libraries to provide direct literacy instruction, most libraries support the efforts of the agencies in the community that provide direct literacy services.

C. Staff Training Component

If most staff members do not have experience in working with people who have literacy needs, decide how the library will provide training for staff. Often the partnering agency(ies) will provide training for the library. System projects are expected to include a training component because training is core to the services all Systems provide.

D. Time Line

Make a list of all the activities related to the project, and the items that would be needed to complete the project. As you work along, arrange the list into specific tasks and begin to put them in steps as to the order in which the tasks would need to be done. As the project takes shape indicate the specific person who will do the task. With the help of your partnering agency(ies) arrange the tasks into a monthly breakdown of when they will be done and who will do what. This time line will eventually become part of the application.

E. Evaluation

Once you have an idea of what you want to do, decide how you would measure the effectiveness of your efforts. You will be measuring more than just a list of activities that get done. Try to think in terms of the over-all impact, the effect what you are doing will have on the community. These will be your outcomes.

F. Budget

Investigate the costs of the materials, subscription, or equipment that may be needed for the project and get estimates.

6. Application Front Page

Complete all lines.

7. Application Abstract

The Abstract is generally the last section of the application to be written. There are no specific points assigned to the Abstract but reviewers are likely to consider it when they assign Overall Merit points. A good Abstract includes an overview of all the activities and objectives of the project. The Abstract should mention significant budgetary elements. The Abstract should not copy the Needs Assessment and Budget sections, but rather summarize them. Although the Abstract is not assigned specific points by reviewers it is extremely important.

When the LSTA Advisory Committee meets to review each category and decide the final category funding, there often is not enough money to fund all the projects that are acceptable. The committee makes a recommendation on how much money will be added or moved out of one category and into another. The committee members receive the Abstract, Objectives and Evaluation, and the Budget sections of each application. A good Abstract can make a strong case for getting a project funded if it happens to fall on the line between those receiving funding and those that will not be funded. The Abstracts are also the only portion of the grant that will be posted on the DLTCL web page. So it is important that the Abstract gives a good overview.

8. Application—Needs Assessment

There are 15 points assigned to the Needs Assessment section of the application. One question applicants are asked is how the project will continue when the funding year is over. It is important to have a strong continuation plan.

Literacy projects are asked to identify any LSTA literacy projects they have had funded in the past 3 years. If the new project is a continuation or expansion of a previous project the applicant needs to make a case for why another year of funding is desired and how the new project differs from what was done in previous LSTA projects.

Applicants are to provide information on the need for the project. This can include information about the specific need in the community or system, data from partnering agencies, census data, or other information that helps reviewers understand why the project is needed. It is helpful if the applicant can demonstrate how their needs are unique or more urgent than in other areas.

9. Application—Objectives and Evaluation

30 points are assigned to the Objectives and Evaluation section of the application.

The best way to develop broad goals and objectives is to review the Strategies in either the *Adults with Special Needs* www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/specialasn.html or *Youth with Special Needs* www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/ysnpl.html publications. The strategies are the same in both but in a slightly different order. Broad outcome statements are included in the publications. They include:

a) Collaboration
b) Planning
c) Training
d) Diversification of materials and services
e) Accessibility of materials and services
f) Marketing to targeted special needs populations

Collaboration is a requirement for all Special Needs projects. Staff should either already have training needed to serve the targeted population, or explain what training will be given during the projects. If targeted marketing is needed for a System application, assistance for the libraries with their marketing efforts is expected.

A strong continuation plan is important to Special Needs projects. This should be firm not something on the order of "we hope the project demonstrates the need for continuing funding" or "we hope to identify a sponsor to continue the project when it ends." A stronger plan would be something on the order of, "The PTA has agreed to consider underwriting the project for the next 3 years if the initial year is successful." It is very common for the project not to need on-going funding because once the library purchases the needed materials or equipment, and establishes relationships with the partnering agencies, the on-going activities will not require funding, just continued effort to meet the targeted group.

Applicants are asked to describe project Objectives and indicate how each will be measured. The intent is to measure the impact on the targeted group, not to that indicate that specific activities were done.

Examples of Measurable Objectives

Goal: YSN Strategy #4: Diversification
Offer a diverse range of resources, services, and programs that are relevant to the lives of youth with special needs, their families, and advocates.

Example 1:
Objective : To encourage personal reading among incarcerated youth by providing the local teen detention center with a deposit collection of 200 high interest/low vocabulary books, which will each be checked out at least once during the grant period.

Example 2:
Objective: A training session will be offered to improve the understanding of librarians about the importance of recorded books for teens struggling with reading, with the expectation that 50 librarians will attend the session, and evaluations will indicate attendees have improved their understanding.

Example 3:
New materials will be purchased to support the project's goal of increasing the number of early math and science activities in day care centers, anticipating that the final circulation data will indicate 80% of the materials circulated at least twice to all participating centers.

Example 4:
Final project data will indicate the number of parent training sessions librarians presented for each participating day care center, with a minimum of 10 participants at each session, and parents attending the sessions will be asked to complete surveys regarding the effectiveness of the training session, with an expectation that 90% of attendees indicate the training was helpful.

Example 5:
After the new job center is created and the marketing plan has been implemented, partnering agencies will survey their clients to see how many have visited the library to use the center with an expectation that 40% of clients will indicate they have used the center.

Example 6:
Clients of participating agencies will be given a flier to bring to the library requesting extended access to the new lap top computers purchased for the project, to write resumes, with the anticipated return rate of 20% of all of the 1000 postcards distributed.

Examples of Non-Measurable Objectives, That Do Not Address Outcomes

Example 1:
Objective:10 videos that help people learn English will be purchased. (There is no indication of what will expected result from the purchase of the videos--how many people will use them, if users find them useful, or how the targeted population will even know the videos are available.)

Example 2:
Notice of the availability of the new materials for English learners will be placed in the local newspaper. (This does not have a evaluative component. But is also inappropriate for the targeted audience because people who don't speak English well are unlikely to have a subscription to the local newspaper or be able to read it. There might be some value in doing this for tutors and for general library awareness, but it is not an effective way to reach the local non-English speaking population. Marketing efforts are expected to be appropriate and relevant to the targeted population.)

Example 3:
Workshops will be offered on serving people who are trying to improve their job skills. (It is not clear who is expected to attend (librarians or job seekers), how many sessions will be held, anticipated attendance at each to make it a successful workshop, or any indication that attendees will help evaluate the effectiveness of the session.

10. Application--Planning and Implementation

This is an important section of the application and 30 points are assigned to it.

A monthly time line is requested. It is important to give the reviewers the overall flow of the project. All activities should be included and should indicate who is doing them. They should be broken out by each month. It is acceptable to indicate some activities will continue each month. The time line should not be overly brief.

Applicants need to briefly indicate how the project fits with the library or System planning documents. Special Needs projects need to cite the Strategies from the ASN or YSN that the project addresses. It is sufficient to say, for example, that the project "meets the following Strategies from the YSN—1. Collaboration 3. Staff Training 4. Diversification of Services ."

Special Needs projects must list their partnering agencies and describe the nature of the collaboration. The collaboration should be reflected in the time line as well. Activities involving the partnering agencies in the time line should indicate the agencies will be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of the project.

11. Application—Budget

15 points are assigned to the combined Budget Summary and Narrative sections. It is not required to include any local funding for the project. Sometimes, including local funding helps the reviewers see how the project fits with other related activities the applicant is doing. No points are added or subtracted for including or not including local dollars. The federal LSTA program staff are also interested in knowing about local matches to federal dollars. Be sure to read the restrictions for the category in the *Guidelines*, and also the FAQ section to avoid including items in the budget that are not allowed. Including non-allowable expenses will result in loss of points and could make the project ineligible for funding.

A. Budget Summary

The Budget summary is best completed after the Narrative is done. The final figures in both must match, rounded to the nearest dollar.

B. Budget Narrative

It is important to read the instructions for each element of the Narrative and follow them. If local funding is involved break out the local funding from the LSTA funding. Give totals for both. For example if Local Funds are reported for Staff, include the total. Then for each of the other segments indicate, “Local Funding 0” or “No Local Funding.” Indicate that “No LSTA Funding Requested” or “LSTA Funds—None” for elements for which LSTA Funds are not being requested. Address the elements in the order listed and use the same format for each section. Applicants should make it very easy for the reviewers to follow and show all their calculations .

1) Salaries, wages and employee benefits

Local personnel costs are not required. If they are included there is no need to break out the wage from the benefits. However, if LSTA funding will be used to pay staff then the hourly rate and benefits must be broken out.

Example of how to report staff costs for LSTA funding:

Employee A will work 10 hours a month for 6 months to order materials for this project and to manage inventory, at $13.40 per hour, with a fringe benefit per hour of $2.30, for a total of $942.
($15.70 per hour x 60 hours = $942)

Employee A currently works 20 hours a week for 4 weeks at $13.40 per hour with a fringe benefit of $2.30 per hour, for a total o $1,256.
($13.40 + $2.30 = total wage and fringe x 20 hours = $314 x 4 weeks = $1,256)

2) Library Collections

Materials such as books, CDs, videos, games, puppets, educational toys, etc. that will be used in-house, as reference items, or circulated should be included here.

Example of how to report library material items:
50 picture books at an average cost of $30 for a total of $1,500.
20 CDs at an average cost of $20 per session for a total of $400.
6 puppets at an average cost of $40 for a total of $240.

3) Contractual Services

Examples of how to report a contractual service:
2 Trainers will be hired to conduct 6 three-hour staff training workshops at a rate of $100 per trainer per hour for each session, for a total of $3,600.
($100 x 3 hours x 6 sessions x 2 trainers =$3,600)

One subscription to LearningExpress Test Preparation services for one year at a cost of Z.

4) Other Operating Expenses

This section includes several different types of expenses. If equipment is purchased that does not exceed the local Capital Expenditure threshold, list them here.

Example of how to report mileage costs:
X number of trips at Y per mile for a total of Z.
The purpose of the mileage is to reimburse participants who attend the training sessions.

Example of how to report printing:
X copies of special needs brochure at an estimated cost of Y per 500 for a total of Z.
The brochures will be distributed by the partnering agencies to help inform their clients about library services.

Example of how to report postage:
X copies of materials at an estimate of Y postage per set for a total of Z.
These materials will be mailed to the clients of the partnering agency.

5) Capital Expenditures

Capital Expenditures are items that meet the applicant's agency threshold for Capital Expenses. The federal threshold is $5000, but local thresholds are often less. Ask your business manager for guidance. It is important to use the local threshold because LSTA funds are issued after the applicant has purchased their materials. The agency needs to be able to code the expenditures using their own policies and be reimbursed later.

The expenses are a per item expense, not a total expense. For example. if the applicant is purchasing 4 laptop computers for a JOBS project at $1,500 each for a total of $6,000 and the local threshold is $5,000, the computers are not Capital Expense because the individual items are not over the local threshold, even though the total is. They should be listed instead under Other Operating Expenses.

12. Additional Comments

This is a place to put any additional information that would help the reviewers understand the project.

Systems coordinating a project that has various different activities done at various libraries should use some sort of assessment tool in advance to gather information they will need to include. This is sometimes referred to as a "mini-grant" approach. Systems need to list the following information:

Library and Person Responsible for Local Project
Local Collaborating Partner and Staff Person Responsible for the Collaboration

If each location is doing its own projects, there must be local measurable objectives for each location or for groups of libraries implementing the same basic project.. More information on this process is included in the Guidelines under "FAQ on LSTA Grants."

13. Application—Certification with statutes and regulations, and Signature

Applicants are required to have the signature of their principle officer to certify compliance with the statutes and regulations listed in this section, and to indicate the project will be properly administered, if funded. The signature page must have an original signature and must be mailed to Terrie Howe with a postmark no later than the application due date. The application itself is submitted on-line.

14. Reviewers' Scoring Sheet

www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/lsta.html

15. Letters of Support

Letters of support can be sent in paper format. Only one letter of support per cooperating agency should be included. It is better to include a letter from the person who will be directly involved with the project; a classroom teacher at an alternative high school, for example, rather than an administer such as a principal or superintendent. No points are given or withheld regarding Letters of Support. They are not required. They can sometimes indicate that the partnering agency is strongly engaged with the project and understands exactly what their role will be. This might contribute to the overall merit or strength of the application.